



The Steller's Quill

BCGREA New Westminster & District

Branch 800

“Fall 2024” Newsletter

Contact info:

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2025 Cash Pay Membership Dues

Membership dues of \$20 are payable each year by January 2nd

(Dues are in arrears after March 15th) For members not on automatic deduction from their February pension your cheque should be made payable to:

**BCGREA Branch 800
P.O. Box 57314
Coquitlam B.C., V3K 0C9**

Are you willing to help?

We need volunteers to assist with hospitality, special events and phoning. Contact Bonnie Billington (Chair) at 604-761-5768 or chair.branch800@bcgrea.ca

It is important that we have both some continuity of service on the board *and* new people joining the branch executive to provide new ideas and energy to our organization. A number of branches are facing closure due to the lack of volunteers.

Anyone interested in attending an executive meeting as a guest, please contact Bonnie Billington at bcgrea800@gmail.com

CHAIR REPORT

In Review:

April 16, 2024 Speaker - Emergency Preparedness. Coquitlam Fire Prevention Officer & Community Educator Denise Ziebert was lively and engaging in her presentation on Fire Safety in and around the home.

100th Birthday Celebration for our member Joe Witiuk May 21, 2024



On retirement from the Department of Highways, Joe became a member of the BCGREA, achieving life membership status in 2006. Among Joe's many post retirement activities with his wife Louise, golf and square dancing took them all over the world and on many road trips throughout the country in their motorhome. Joe has remained active after Louise passed away in 2011 and to this day he lives independently in Port Coquitlam, close to his supportive family. He enjoys daily walks and maintains a lifelong passion for gardening. His motto for longevity is "The more you walk, the longer you live!"

Joe & BCGREA President Brian Green



Photo taken by Brian Green

June 25th 2024: Branch 800 AGM at the new t̄əm̄əsew̄t̄x̄w Aquatic and Community Centre in New Westminster. Our thanks to **Brenda Felker** for conducting the Election of Officers.

Branch 800 Executive for 2024/25 elected by acclamation, effective August 1, 2024:

Chairperson: **Bonnie Billington**

First Vice Chair: **Michael Strath**

Treasurer: **Alex Dennison**

Goodwill: **Jean Ing**

Second Vice Chair: *Vacant*

Secretary: *Vacant*

Membership Chair: *Vacant*

Telephone Convener: **Marilyn Melville**

Directors:

Dennis Ishikawa

Andy McColl

Anna Tremere

Marleine Wagner

A big Thank You to outgoing branch executive members: **Rita Pollock, Alfred Malcolm, Donna Main and Kathy Nelson.** **Thank you to Alex Dennison** for stepping up as our new Treasurer!

Branch 800 Executive wishes to acknowledge former Membership Secretary and Privacy Officer **Rita Pollock** as deserving of special recognition for her many years of hard work, commitment and dedication in serving the membership. A *Certificate of Appreciation* was presented to Rita in September by Chair Bonnie Billington and Director Anna Tremere.

Thirteen members of Branch 800 achieved 'Life Membership Status' in 2024. Subsequently a certificate was sent out in August to each in recognition of twenty consecutive years as a member of the BCGREA.

**Please note:* no rental space is available to us at the New Aquatic Centre this Fall until Nov. 19th. We are tentatively scheduled there for our meetings in Jan, Feb and March 2025. Meanwhile we thank the Royal Canadian Legion in Coquitlam for the opportunity to return.

Sept 17, 2024: Branch Meeting was held at the Coquitlam Legion with 26 members attending. A **Discussion about Greenshield was on the Agenda.** A significant number of members present voiced their dissatisfaction with lack of clarity on our plan's extended benefits, denial of coverage, and rejected claims. The whole process is especially stressful for seniors and valuable physician time is often spent filling out more forms for the same claim. For more on this topic, check out the article on page 11 in the Summer 2024 issue of *the PEN* Newsletter titled 'Navigating our Dental & Health Insurance.' Members are encouraged to share their experiences and bring forward their complaints in writing to BCGREA President Brian Green *and the PSPP as well in order to be investigated.* Our association does have a representative on the PSPP Board of Trustees, whose role it is to advocate for our benefits.

COMING UP...

OCT 15, 2024 *NO BRANCH MEETING due to branch exec attending pre-AGM meetings.

Provincial BCGREA AGM October 16, 2024 will be held at the Coast Tsawwassen Inn for in-person and virtual attendees. Branch 800 Voting Delegates are Bonnie Billington, (Chair) & Michael Strath (1st Vice Chair). Branch members can observe the meeting on Zoom by contacting Jodine Ducs at infor@bcgre.ca and BCGREA Secretary kathytorhjeml@shaw.ca.

Oct 22, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. Branch Meeting at the Royal Canadian Legion: 1025 Ridgeway Ave in Coquitlam. **Speaker topic: "Showing Clutter The Door"** presented by Professional Organizer **Heather Knittel**.

Nov 19, 2024 at 1:00 p.m: Branch Meeting at the təmasewtxw Aquatic and Community Centre: 65 Sixth Ave. East in New Westminster. **Speaker topic "Medical Assistance in Dying"** This is an educational presentation by **Alex Muir**, Chair from the Mero Vancouver chapter of *Dying With Dignity Canada*.



Christmas Lunch - Tues. Dec. 3rd - 11:30 a.m.

at the

Royal Canadian Legion (Ballroom) in Port Coquitlam
2675 Shaughnessy St. Entrance adjacent to parking lot behind the building. Lots of free parking.

Tickets - \$30 members; **\$35** non-members

- *purchase in advance* / available until November 22nd.

A traditional turkey dinner will be served buffet style. For tickets and more info **contact Ann Pratt: 604-464-5580** or email abratt@telus.net

Announcements

What's going on with other Branches? BCGREA 1st Vice President George Bowden has posted a **province wide 'Branch Event Calendar'** on the BCGREA website, showcasing the most up to date meetings and events that can be easily accessed on the main page www.bcgrea.ca by clicking on 'News' then 'Events'. Branches can edit in their own info or contact Central Support.

ATTENTION: CASH PAY MEMBERS: We thank the members who have already switched to automatic dues checkoff and thanks to those who remain on cash pay who responded to reminders / notices and sent in their dues for 2024. However, it's almost time for renewal again so we urge you to send in your 2025 dues before January 2nd so we can submit them to Provincial BCGREA in a timely manner.

Provincial BCGREA Regulations Part 3; 9 (a) state the following: "Members, whose dues are in arrears on the 30th of September in any year, shall forfeit their good standing and

privileges in the Association will be suspended. (b) If on the 31st day of December in the same year the dues shall remain unpaid, their names shall be removed from the membership roll and they shall be advised in writing of such action. They may be reinstated with no lapse in membership, if all arrears and current dues are paid within one month of such notice. Any greater delay shall require a new member application."

If anyone is aware of members residing in Assisted or Long Term Care facilities, please notify Branch 800 Director Anna Tremere (604-936-3382). As valued members of our branch it is important that we maintain contact, so they and their families do not feel forgotten.

Thank You BCGEU!

Services provided by the BCGEU print room staff are invaluable to our branch and we appreciate their ongoing assistance with our copying needs and newsletter mailout.

About Coffee

by Andy Mc Coll

During my years in Scotland, all the grocers in my hometown were privately owned. Smith's had two windows facing the street and in the corner by one window stood a large (to me) machine, which I never saw operating but gave off a pleasant aroma of ground coffee. I don't recall if it had the aroma during the war years and I never learned who bought the coffee. I do remember liking the smell up until Smith retired in 1948 and sold his shop to the Scottish Cooperative Wholesalers Society, known as "the Co"; the first chain store to set up in town. During the Co's remodelling of the store the coffee grinder disappeared.

Coffee for most Brits, was a brown powder (no freeze dried crystals in those days) that came in a little brown labelled can marked "Nescafe". To maintain freshness the can had a recessed lid, similar to paint can lids which you had to pry open with the end of your spoon then press down to close it. When I worked at Dykebar in Paisley, I had one such can in my locker and every week and a half or so, I would have a coffee instead of tea with my meal on evening shift. I would make it with hot water and add a little milk. Some people would heat up milk and stir their instant coffee into that. My mother would sometimes make herself a 'white coffee' in the evening on the days we had been light on the milk.

Another who liked his coffee made that way was Hughie, one of the nurses at Argyll & Bute Hospital where I trained. Hughie had trained in the years shortly after the Second World War and was fond of telling we students in the late 'fifties that we "don't know the first thing about putting in a day's work!" At the A & B we worked a two shift system, 7am to 8pm and 8 pm to 7am. We worked on 12 (or 13?) week rotations, with the four days interspersed with single and multiple days off. After working three rotations we would go on night shift for 13 weeks. On nights we had three breaks, a paid tea break from 9:30pm to 10:30 and a paid meal break at

12:30 a.m. to 1:30 a.m. At these breaks, as junior man in the Male infirmary I would be sent to do some of the meal relief. For the third break, one of the New Cowal dormitory staff would come to the infirmary and pick up hot tea for the dormitory staff. In those days rather than numbering the hospital's wards and dorms, the names of districts in the counties were used, namely Argyll and (no surprise) Bute.

My times on night shift coincided with Hughie's. One of the jibes he directed at me was that I "would maybe go home hungry but never go home tired", implying that I was lazy. While there may have been some truth in that, I was a sensitive youth and it rankled. When Hughie and I worked the same nights, he would give me orders to have milk heated for his coffee at dinner time.

One night I was on hand to see Hughie make his coffee. When the A & B was built, the infirmary was equipped with coal fireplaces, where the night staff traditionally sat for their breaks. Hughie picked up his little can of milk from the ward kitchen and came through to sit by the fire. I watched him pry open his coffee can, measure some in his mug and pour in his heated milk...plop plop plop into the mug, stirring vigorously.

"C***st McColl, you don't know the first thing about heating milk!"

"How? What's wrong with it? (This was some years before I came to Canada and lost my accent).

Hughie's critique.."It's mair lumps than milk!"

Nobody ever clued Hughie in that I would put his milk on to simmer at 10:30 and go in every 15 or 20 minutes over the next hour and a half to stir down the skin that formed on the top and replenish any milk that had steamed away. And there you have a textbook example of passive aggressive behavior.

Anyone for coffee?

In Memoriam

We regret to announce the passing of the following members:

**William Cliffe, Carol Erickson, Mary C. Gaetz
Agnes (Nessie) Howden, Frank C. Kennedy, Constance Jean Lawless
Donald W. McKillop, Thomas McLoughlin, Margaret (Beth) Murphy
Vivian Rail, Ida Leona Van Horn**

Late Entry (2023):

**Sidney A.P. Birchfield, Dorothy M. Brisco
Lolita Borja Dumbrique, Nicholas P. Warburton**

The Executive and members of the BCGREA, New Westminster & District Branch 800 express sincere condolences to these families and their friends.